Friday
March 30, 2018

TODAY **77 / 55** Mostly sunny

SATURDAY **81 / 61** Partly sunny

SUNDAY **83 / 64** Partly sunny

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AUSTIN360

TEXAS ROLLERGIRLS ARE READY TO ROLL AGAIN

SPORTS, C1

OPENING DAY IN TEXAS

World champion Astros start quest for a repeat against rival

AUSTIN BOMBINGS COMMUNITY REACTION

Chief: Bombings were 'terrorism'

Chas Moore of the Austin Justice Coalition (left), interim Police Chief Brian Manley, Emlyn Lee of BRAVE and Gilbert Rivera speak on a panel about the deadly bombings and the response. RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Brian Manley, interim police chief, avoided such language earlier in favor of legal terminology.

By Mary Huber
mhuber@statesman.com

Austin's interim police chief on Thursday called the Austin bomber a "domestic terrorist," circling back on previous comments in which he had shied away from using that label to describe the man who killed two people this month with package bombs.

The statement came as many in the community, still reeling in the aftermath of the explosions, urged city leaders to call the attacks acts of terrorism.

Bombings continued on **A11**

COMING SUNDAY
The investigation and community reaction to the series of deadly Austin bombings exposed long-festering resentment about institutional racism by the Austin Police Department, city officials and Austin itself. This Sunday we explore how the first bombings that killed two black men and injured a Hispanic woman inspired a visceral reaction that officials seemed unable to fathom.

NEW DETAILS PROPERTY TAXES

Property values continue to climb in Travis County

By Shonda Novak
snovak@statesman.com

On Friday, Travis County Chief Appraiser Marya Crigler will start sending out property value appraisal notices to Travis County homeowners – and the reaction from homeowners probably will be pretty familiar.

If you're trying to sell your house, you'll likely be pretty happy with your home's new valuation.

If you are staying put and dreading a higher property tax bill, you probably won't like what Crigler's office tells you.

As has been the norm the past few years in booming Austin, both the median taxable and median market values for Travis County homes are both up by more than 9 percent, Crigler's office said Thursday.

The median taxable home value – the amount used to determine your property tax bill – climbed 10.1 percent to $249,100 from $226,091 in 2017. The taxable value is the market value, after exemptions. Median means half of the houses in Travis County were valued at less than $249,100 and half were valued at more than that amount.

Meanwhile, the median mar-

Property continued on **A10**

ALSO INSIDE
» Disagree with the market value of you property? Information on how to file a protest, **A10**

COURTS

Sex investigation reopened against judicial candidate

By Tony Plohetski
tplohetski@statesman.com

The top state criminal district judge in Travis County appointed a special prosecutor Thursday to investigate whether a judge candidate had sex with a 16-year-old foreign exchange student a dozen years ago.

Rusty Hardin, a noted Houston attorney, will immediately begin investigating the allegations against Chantal Eldridge. It comes about three weeks after Eldridge, a defense lawyer, overwhelmingly defeated incumbent David Crain in the Democratic primary for the 331st Criminal District Court.

WHAT WE REPORTED
The American-Statesman first reported on the 2006 child sex allegation investigation against judicial candidate Chantal Eldridge on Feb. 22. Eldridge, a Democrat, won her primary election March 6 and faces no challengers in the November general election. She is set to take office in January.

In the final weeks of Eldridge's campaign, a man who lives in Brazil and who stayed with her in 2006 while he was an exchange student came forward to say that

Eldridge continued on **A8**

STATESMAN EXCLUSIVE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Intake specialist Raushana Brewer listens to a call in her cubicle in the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' Statewide Intake Call Center. The department is on track this year to exceed 180,000 abandoned calls to its abuse hotline, the most in at least a decade. RALPH BARRERA / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Calls to the Texas abuse hotline go unanswered

WHO TO CALL
The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services takes reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, elderly persons and adults with disabilities. People who have been hurt by staff in facilities overseen by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission should also report it to the state welfare agency. To reach the Texas Abuse Hotline, call 1-800-252-5400. Reports also can be submitted through **txabusehotline.org**, although it's not recommended for urgent issues.

By Julie Chang
jchang@statesman.com

More than 100,000 callers each year to report potential child or elder abuse and neglect in Texas are hanging up before reaching an operator because of long wait times.

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is on track this year to exceed 180,000 abandoned calls to the agency's abuse hotline, the most in at least a decade. As of Tuesday, there had been 23 days this year in which a caller had been on hold for more than an hour; in the past, the agency has had one or two such days per year.

It's not clear whether the long wait times and abandoned calls have led to abuse and neglect cases going unreported to the state agency, but officials say the problems have created risks the state can't afford.

"We hope that everyone who has a concern they want to report to us finds a way to do that, either by calling back or doing an internet report. But the longer the hold times are and the more calls are abandoned, the greater risk that something is not going to be reported to us and DFPS does not have an opportunity to protect a vulnerable child or adult," said Ric Zimmerman, associate commissioner of statewide intake with the Department of Family and Protective Services, which

Hotline continued on **A4**

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NATION & WORLD, A10

Russia ousts 150 envoys in expulsion retaliation

Action, in response to Western ousters over poisoning of ex-spy in Britain, includes 60 Americans.

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A GUIDE FOR YOUNG BOOMERS & BEYOND
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